

# HOUSE . . . . . No. 2807

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By Mr. Atsalis of Barnstable, petition of Demetrius J. Atsalis relative to establishing an office of the family and children's ombudsman. Children and Families.

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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In the Year Two Thousand and Five.

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### AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN OFFICE OF THE FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 Chapter 6 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding  
2 the following section:—

3 Section 214. There is hereby established an office of the family  
4 and children's ombudsman under the exclusive supervision and  
5 control of a director who shall be appointed by the secretary of  
6 health and human services with the approval of the governor. The  
7 purpose of the office is to provide an independent voice for fami-  
8 lies and children who have been placed under the supervision of  
9 the department of social services.

10 The position of director shall be classified in accordance with  
11 section 45 of chapter 30, and the salary shall be determined in  
12 accordance with section 46C of said chapter 30. The director shall  
13 devote full time during business hours to the duties of the office.  
14 The director shall be authorized, subject to appropriation, to  
15 appoint and may remove such assistant directors and such other  
16 employees and consultants as may be necessary to perform the  
17 functions of the office set forth in section 207. The provisions of  
18 chapter 31 shall not apply to the director, to such assistant direc-  
19 tors as the director may appoint, or to such supervisory positions  
20 as the director may create.

21 The office shall have the following powers: (a) provide an inde-  
22 pendent resource for families and children to seek redress of

23 grievances with the department; (b) monitor the department's  
24 compliance with existing laws, policies and procedures; (c) pro-  
25 pose amendments and improvement of existing laws, policies and  
26 procedures to promote family preservation and reunification and  
27 children's safety, well-being and permanency; (d) serve as liaison  
28 among consumers, the department, the general court, the governor  
29 and the children's bureau; (e) identify and articulate to the general  
30 court, governor, public agencies and the public the needs of these  
31 families and children; (f) provide public information relative to  
32 laws and services affecting the families and children; (g) oversee  
33 the accuracy and timeliness of the department's reporting of data  
34 with regard to those children, and investigate consumer com-  
35 plaints and recommend to appropriate authorities solutions.